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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

March 27, 2001

The Honorable Elaine Chao, Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Madame Secretary:

Thank you for the letter you sent to members of Congress during the debate on S. J. Res. 6 to invalidate the OSHA regulation on ergonomics under the Congressional Review Act. We would not have passed S.J. Res. 6, and certainly not with the bipartisan support that it received, without your making it clear that the Department would pursue the issue of reducing exposure to ergonomics hazards in the workplace if the OSHA regulation was struck down.

In your letter you committed to pursuing "a comprehensive approach to ergonomics which may include new rulemaking." It is now time to begin determining what will comprise that comprehensive approach. There are a variety of possible elements and I think that the best approach will rely on more than just another regulation to reduce work related MSDs.

Because the ergonomics issue is so complex, and there are so many interested parties, I believe the Department should convene some form of a "blue ribbon commission". This would allow the various sides to participate in a dialog about what OSHA should do to address work related MSDs. While the politics of this issue are omnipresent, and the emotions run deep, it is imperative that all sides have an opportunity to contribute to determining OSHA's approach.

Although this process will need to be guided by whoever becomes Assistant Secretary for OSHA, it is not too soon to begin thinking about what steps the Department will take. I am sure you appreciate how sensitive this subject is and how it will define your term as Secretary.

I look forward to working closely with you and OSHA to fashion a reasonable and responsible approach to this most difficult work place safety issue. Please feel free to contact me if I can offer any assistance.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. "Kit" Bond